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MR. COOLIDGE'S ADDRESS ON SECONDARY EDUCATION

WINGATE JUNIOR COLLEGE

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The important place which the secondary schools of the country occupy is coming to be more generally recognized. Those in direction of the institutions of higher learning and thoughtful men of affairs now realize that it is in such schools that the character of the future citizen is largely molded and the habits of thought and study formed.

In his address at Andover, Massachussetts, on May 19, 1928, at the exercises commemorative of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of Phillips Academy, President Coolidge discussed the contribution made by the preparatory schools and urged their right to more liberal support.

We venture to believe that an address of such importance will be of interest to you, and with Mr. Coolidge's approval and that of Mr. Stearns of Phillips Academy, it has been reprinted and is sent to you with our compliments.

TAMBLYN AND BROWN
17 EAST FORTY-SECOND STREET · NEW YORK CITY

Underwood & Underwood

CALVIN COOLIDGE

My Fellow Citizens:

It is more than the passage of time that brings us here to observe and celebrate this anniversary of Phillips Academy. One hundred and fifty years is a very respectable period of modern history. The number of chartered institutions which can claim an existence of that length is not large. The significance of this occasion, however, lies not in the number of days but in the importance of purpose and the magnitude of accomplishment. This institution had its beginnings in a very interesting era. The morning mist at Lexington and Concord had scarcely been dissipated. The Declaration of Independence was still a novelty. Liberty and independence were in the making. A new nation was coming into existence. Men were turning toward the dawn, intent upon establishing institutions stamped with their own individuality.

It was a time when the teachings of the Puritans were becoming disengaged from the forms and customs with which they had been surrounded and were emerging into a practical application in a broader field of human affairs. The principles of freedom and

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equality were not only talked about, but they were coming to be observed. The doctrine that the individual was "endowed with certain inalienable rights" was not new. Under the constitution of England the people were protected from the power of the Crown, though left almost entirely at the mercy of the Parliament. In these revolutionary days it was the individual who stood out as the political and social unit. Hereafter sovereignty was to repose in him alone. The right of the people to govern themselves was coming to be practically applied. That action was revolutionary.

These conditions brought new thoughts to men's minds. Not only were there battles to be fought, but constitutions to be adopted, and the independent foundations of an enlightened society were to be laid. Under these circumstances it was but natural that the needs of education should be canvassed anew. If there was to be popular sovereignty, if there was to be popular government, there must be popular education. Soon after its settlement Massachusetts had started to found a college at Cambridge. At about the same time a public school had been opened. But at the

outset the college was primarily to train youth for the ministry and for public office. It was not intended in its beginnings to serve the ends of democracy, but to provide learning for the ruling classes. In the light of the revolutionary day it was recognized by thoughtful men that there were no longer to be ruling classes. The people were to rule themselves. Knowing that a college course was necessarily limited to a very few, it was seen to be necessary to extend to a larger number advantages beyond those provided by the public schools and the Latin schools. As the high school had a local and limited field, this was to be done through the establishment of academies.

The founders of this school may have had another motive. They were intent on creating their own institutions. Five months before the General Court granted a charter to Phillips Academy a long list of the prominent men of Massachusetts, including Samuel Phillips, Jr., had secured a charter for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Perhaps this was to develop into a society corresponding to the Royal Academy. It was no doubt realized that the secondary schools of England held a position which was

considered of even more importance than the influence of her colleges. A man of liberal culture acquainted with the opinions of Locke and Milton on education like Judge Phillips, who must have been in contact with English officers stationed in the colony, must have learned of the general school system of England. But whatever knowledge the founders may have had of Old World speculations and New World practice, they entered on a somewhat new field which can best be described as resting upon sound common sense.

The new academy was to represent the spirit of the time. It stood upon foundations that were deeply religious. Its first and principal object was declared to be "the promotion of true piety and virtue." It provided instruction in the classics, the sciences, and the arts. While a new emphasis was laid on the teaching of English, it held otherwise to the regular courses in the education of that day. But this academy was conceived to have a broader purpose than to serve any profession or class, and it was therefore dedicated to teaching its students "the great end and real business of living." It was to be "ever equally open to youth

of requisite qualifications from every quarter." It was to be a national school of breadth and of vision, of freedom and of equality, dedicated without reserve to the service of God and man.

It has always been recognized that this school owes very much of the atmosphere which has always surrounded it to the character of Samuel Phillips, Jr. It was the inspiration of a young man seeking to minister to young men. When he became the object of a little envy by some of his fellow students at college, we find him writing to his father: "Let me be interested in the Lord and no matter who is against me." Such a statement from the pen of Judge Phillips was neither form nor cant, but the expression of his abiding faith in the great realities. Yet he was intensely interested in the people about him and in current affairs. He was lamenting at one time that he had neglected his books and "only gained a little further knowledge of the world." He was not a recluse, but rather a leader and an organizer, even in his undergraduate days, with the natural social qualities of youth. Samuel Phillips had applied himself to his work, he had followed the truth, he had brought his

faculties under discipline. His mastery over himself gave him a mastery over his associates, and imparted not only to his work, but to his pleasures, a dignity and a character.

Graduating at about the age that young men now enter college, he at once became interested in the important public affairs that preceded independence. His immediate family were conservative in their outlook, but patriotic. For his own part he committed himself whole-heartedly to the Revolution. We find him during the Battle of Bunker Hill removing the Harvard library to a place of safety. He was one of a number of citizens to confer with General Washington at Cambridge, and was later producing gun powder for the Army. But he was not so much interested in warfare as he was in truth and liberty. He does not rank as a soldier, but as a statesman.

While plans were being perfected for this academy, Judge Phillips was a member of the constitutional convention of the Commonwealth, where he served on a special committee to draft a declaration of rights and frame of government, which was adopted as the fundamental law of Massachusetts. In

this work he was associated with such men as John Adams and James Bowdoin. If anyone desires to be informed concerning the public opinion of that day, there is no better record of it than the preamble and declaration of rights which was then adopted. It contains more political wisdom, sound common sense, and wise statesmanship than I have ever seen anywhere else within a like compass. If it could be faithfully expounded to the youth of our country it would do much to rescue them from unsound social and political doctrines. As a practical rule of human relationship, the declaration in Article XVIII, that—

A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the Constitution and a constant adherence to those of piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to maintain a free government—is only surpassed by the Golden Rule. In the frame of government there is a noble expression of the aims of education and the arts and a wise provision for their promotion and protection by the public authorities. These were the beliefs and opinions that Judge Phillips and his associates held. For

their perpetuation and preservation this school was founded.

The character of the founder and the attendant circumstances gave it a very broad outlook. Everything provincial was disregarded. It has always been and is now decidedly national in its scope. This was in accordance with the prevailing needs of the time. We know the acquaintanceship which began with General Washington at Cambridge and developed into so much confidence and respect that he placed several of his near kindred in this school. Meanwhile we find him expressing the opinion that assembling the youth of different parts of the country to be educated together would be a powerful influence against sectionalism. Washington was so much impressed with the desirability of strengthening the national spirit through the system of education that he urged it again in his will and made a bequest to assist in founding an American university in the Capital City. In order to promote this design admission to Phillips Academy has always been granted without respect to residence.

While careful provision was made to increase the

intellectual power of the students even greater emphasis was placed on increasing their moral power. The attention of the master was especially directed to the fact that "knowledge without goodness is dangerous," and he was charged constantly to instruct the students in the precepts of the Christian religion. Our doctrine of equality and liberty, of humanity and charity, comes from our belief in the brotherhood of man through the fatherhood of God. The whole foundation of enlightened civilization, in government, in society, and in business, rests on religion. Unless our people are thoroughly instructed in its great truths they are not fitted to understand our institutions or provide them with adequate support. For our independent colleges and secondary schools to be neglectful of their responsibilities in this direction is to turn their graduates loose with simply an increased capacity to prey upon each other. Such a dereliction of duty would put in jeopardy the whole fabric of society. For our chartered institutions of learning to turn back to the material and neglect the spiritual would be treason, not only to the cause for which they were founded, but to man and to God.

One of the results of these beliefs led this school to come out squarely for equality. It provided an opportunity which was to be open to all. Our country has rightly put a very large emphasis on this principle. The Declaration of Independence made that its prime assertion. The constitution of Massachusetts reiterated it with the significant addition that all men are born free. Yet there has been great difficulty in bringing the government within its operation. At its outset there was a tendency to establish a ruling class consisting of wealth and social position. When that was overturned the other extreme prevailed, which was followed by a fluctuating back and forth between these two. Neither of them is in harmony with our theory of equality. Our country and its government belongs to all the people. It ought not to be under the domination of any one element or any one section. For it to fall under the entire control of the people of wealth or people of poverty, of people who are employers or people who are wage earners, would be contrary to our declared principles. They should all be partakers in the responsibilities and benefits, and all be represented in the administration of our

government. Those who are charged with the conduct of our affairs should be equally solicitous for the welfare of all localities and all classes. There should be no outlaws and no favorites, but all should be beneficiaries of the common good through the discharge of common duties.

It was the thought of Judge Phillips to give to our youth the benefit of careful training during their early years. He knew that unless correct habits of thought are formed at the very outset of life they are not formed at all. Two great tests in mental discipline are accuracy and honesty. It is far better to master a few subjects thoroughly than to have a mass of generalizations about many subjects. The world will have little use for those who are right only a part of the time. Whatever may be the standards of the class room, practical life will require something more than 60 percent or 70 percent for a passing mark. The standards of the world are not like those set by the faculty, but more closely resemble those set by the student body themselves. They are not at all content with a member of the musical organizations who can strike only 90 percent of the notes. They do not tol-

erate the man on the diamond who catches only 80 percent of the balls. The standards which the student body set are high. They want accuracy that is well nigh complete. They apply the same standards to candor and honesty. Bluff and pretense may be permitted in the class room, but in their relations with each other students regard such practices with contempt and those who resort to them are properly considered to be cheap. They may be willing to view with considerable tolerance those who break the rules of the school, but they will not fail to mete out condemnation and penalty on those who break the rules of training. When the world holds its examinations it will require the same standards of accuracy and honesty which student bodies impose upon themselves. Unless the mind is brought under such training and discipline as will enable it to acquire these standards at an early period, that grave danger increases that they may never be acquired.

It is for this reason that our secondary schools are of such great importance. When students now enter the college they are no longer of an impressionable age. Habits of thought have become fixed. The col-

lege cannot altogether refashion its students. About the best it can do is to carry them on in the course they have already begun. While the needs of our universities are very great, and every effort should be made to meet them it does not seem that sufficient emphasis has been placed on the needs of our secondary schools. After all, they furnish the material that goes into our higher institutions. Their younger and more plastic students have even greater needs than those who are more mature. They ought to come under the influence of teachers of ability, character and sympathy. It may not be so difficult to secure teachers who are proficient in certain subjects, but that is far from sufficient. Judge Phillips said very little concerning the scholarship of the master and his assistants, but he put a great deal of emphasis on their character. He was looking beyond the lessons of the class room to the "real business of living."

The hope which he expressed was that this school might be an example for others. That hope has been realized. This has long been recognized as one of the leading schools of our country. If the real needs of the students of such schools are to be met, if their

teaching force is to be adequate, reasonable endowments must be provided. In the remarkably successful efforts that have been made to raise funds for education too little attention has been given to our secondary schools. As they have led in many other directions, the authorities and alumni of Phillips Academy have recently secured funds for the erection of buildings and the respectable remuneration of its teaching force. Those who have generously aided this effort have done a great public service. What has been done here, others could and should do.

Next after his duty to his Maker, Samuel Phillips placed his duty to his country. He had served his fellow men in a legislative and a judicial capacity, and at the time of his death was lieutenant governor of the Commonwealth, but it is scarcely to be considered that he thought duty to country consisted in holding public office. He undoubtedly was concerned with the larger field of good citizenship. While it will always be necessary to give attention to the choice of public officers, if good citizenship could be made to prevail, offices would very largely look after themselves. Although he was no doubt an unbending fed-

eralist in his political life, he was still enough of a revolutionist so that he was more interested in training young men for citizenship than in preparing them for public office. To his mind, faith in God was inseparable from faith in his country and faith in his fellow men.

In these days, when there is so large an amount of delegated power the danger is increased that the average citizen may take too much for granted. Because the affairs of his country have been progressing satisfactorily, he may think nothing can change their course. Such is not the case. When the country makes progress it is because someone gives it careful attention and direction, and because the people are contented, industrious and law-abiding, and as a whole are discharging their duties of citizenship.

When the cause of the Revolution still hung in the balance, when this school was conducted in an abandoned carpenter shop, before our federal Constitution had made our scattered colonies into one nation, when authority was weak and all the future was uncertain, the patriots of that day offered life, fortune, and honor in defence of their country. They did not

doubt; they did not complain. They went forward, placing their hope on the sure support of liberty and justice, the improvement of agriculture, industry, and commerce, and the advance of education. The day has come when we have seen their hope fulfilled, when we have seen their faith justified, and when success has demonstrated the correctness of their theories. The general advance made by our country is commensurate with the advance which has been made by Phillips Academy. As we behold it our doubts ought to be removed, our faith ought to be replenished. Our determination to make such sacrifices as are necessary for the common good ought to be strengthened. We may be certain that our country is altogether worthy of us. It will be necessary to demonstrate that we are worthy of our country.

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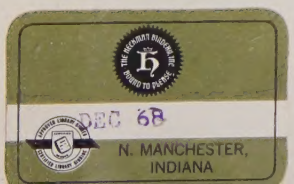

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